

MFC MARCH 2023

NONCONFIDENTIAL

Sunday, March 19

Co-Chairs: Jackie Clement, Amanda Poppei, Michael Tino, Paul Langston-Daley, Alison ALG McLeod, Jacqueline Brett, Joetta Prost, Beth Norton, Karen LoBracco, Shirley Lange, Cindy Malley, Greg Ward, Nathalie Edmond.

FYMEs-Meg McGuire, mandi huizenga, Ali Peters

UUA Staff: Sarah Lammert, Marta Valentin, Jonipher Kwong, Marion Bell

OPEN MEETING

FYME REPORT BACK- Report found:

www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/mfc/liaisons

CWG MARCH 2023 NON-CONFIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO FULL MFC

1. Policy 7. Scheduling of Interviews Suggested change.

A. Requirements for Scheduling Interviews

Candidates for Unitarian Universalist ministerial fellowship must request an interview in writing using the Ministerial Fellowship Committee Appointment Request Form. Candidates should be at least two-thirds of the way through their preparation for ministry at the time of their MFC interview. Final evaluations from Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and mid-term (or final) internship evaluations must be submitted to request an MFC appointment.

The Candidacy Working Group has approved this change and recommends its adoption by the full MFC.

Motion by the CWG: to accept the above recommendation. Approved, unanimous.

MFC Policies updated by Marion and Jonipher March 20, 2023

2. Update to Policy 3.D. i. iii

An acknowledgement that candidates are on different paths and that especially post-pandemic, congregational programming is different. Also, many congregations may not have a religious educator.

- iii. ; A Religious Educator or in the event a Religious Educator is not available, someone who can best describe the candidate's experience with religious education.

TABLED for further discussion.

3. Suggested Update to MFC Policy 3.B.iii

Current Policy 3.B.iii:

If not graduated from a graduate theological school, evidence of acceptance to a theological school or another approved program, such as an acceptance letter, enrollment verification letter, or unofficial transcript. Or, if graduated from a theological school, submission of that official transcript. Also, submission of all official transcripts from prior graduate level academic preparation.

Suggested new language:

Evidence of acceptance to a Master of Divinity (MDiv) program at an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited theological school, such as an acceptance letter, enrollment verification letter, or unofficial transcript. Or, if graduated from an ATS accredited theological school, submission of that official MDiv transcript. Also, submission of all official transcripts from prior graduate level academic preparation.

Reasons for change: This policy doesn't mention "MDiv" specifically. The MDiv is a requirement, as noted in MFC Rule 11:

A candidate for the Ministry shall also have a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school approved by the Committee, or have had an equivalent educational experience.

The suggested update also makes clear that the program must be from an ATS accredited school.

Motion by the CWG to recommends the full MFC adopt the above change to Policy 3.B.iii. Approved, unanimous.

MFC Policies updated by Marion and Jonipher March 20, 2023

4. Requirements for Contract/Interim ministry approvals for aspirants/candidates

Jonipher is often asked to approve contract ministries. He would like a formal guideline on what to look for in the formation of the aspirant/candidate and what to require when approving the contract ministry. The below list was drafted at the December 2022 meeting.

Required:

1. Completion of CPE
2. Internship experience
3. Clear job description
4. Membership in UUMA
5. Active participation in the MFN

6. Recommendations from at least two of the following UUA-related sources:
 - Congregational Life Staff
 - UUMA Vocational Advisor
 - Fully Fellowshiped Mentor who is a member of the UUMA
 - Rep from local UUMA Chapter

The following experiences are beneficial but not required:

- a. Interim ministry training
- b. Mentoring relationships beyond the MFN
- c. Spiritual direction

Updated Requirements booklet on March 20, 2023-Marion and Jonipher

PWG MEETING - REPORT OUT TO MFC March 2023

Retreat planning is underway for our first in-person retreat since going virtual! We hope all MFC members will join us May 8-10 outside Baltimore. Amanda will be joined by Beth, Nathalie, and Cindy in planning with Julica Hermann de la Fuente. The retreat will focus on anti-racism work with a developmental perspective, including how we can bring that perspective to our assessment of candidates. It will also include lots of relational and connecting time, embodied and self-care time, and play time.

We are planning out for trainings in the future, expecting the bulk of our training time to happen at the late spring in-person retreats but imagining there will also be 60-90 minute trainings at some of our regular virtual meetings. We are considering using the UUMA's recorded series on neurodivergence.

The UUA Board passed the changes we requested to the rules around complaints, making the process slightly easier on complainants. Hurrah! In the coming months we will ask the Board to provide feedback on SWG's preliminary fellowship reimaging, and ultimately to likely pass rule changes based on that work.

We are aware of numerous MFC openings in the coming months, including two UUMA reps and a psychologist. Amanda is staying in touch with Kimberley Debus, chair of the UUA Appointments Committee, and Amanda and Jackie have communicated with Darrick Jackson of the UUMA.

Sarah will present information on the new thresholds of misconduct documentation—now an appendix to the MFC Rules and Policies—at a UUMA webinar. She will seek opportunities to offer a similar webinar to LREDA and AUUMM.

Sarah is taking a first draft attempt to respond to the list of rule/policy changes needed as determined by the SWG, to bring our work in compliance with current practices and with our hopes for transformation.

The MFC will meet with the three-person team creating the Reading List proposal this Sunday, and then have a chance to talk about the proposal and specifically their request that we add a Theology competency.

Darrick Jackson contacted Sarah to ask about the “wellness” rubric in Fulfilling the Call, which doesn’t reflect our current understandings around neurodivergence, body size, and mental health. There is now a disclaimer that asks people not to use that rubric. It is possible that the whole thing (10 years old) needs an update, especially if we add a Theology competency (as requested by the reading list group). Sarah will continue to talk with Darrick about this, as Fulfilling the Call was a UUMA/UUA joint venture. The UUA portion was led by the MFC.

There was discussion about how the change in Rule numbers is confusing, especially now that Rule 18A is now 17A. PWG will take this into consideration and think about how to make them more accessible.

SETTLEMENT WORKING GROUP REPORT/RECOMMENDATION

Update on Transforming Preliminary Fellowship – See Addendum #3

Recommended removal of Policy 12 B.

Policy as it is currently written:

12. Renewals of Preliminary Fellowship

B. Alternate Renewal Option for Ministers Transferring from Another Denomination

At the discretion of the Professional Development Director, fellowshipped ministers with five (5) or more years of credentialed experience in another denomination may be eligible for renewal of Preliminary Fellowship under an alternate procedure. This option may be used for any number of renewals of Preliminary Fellowship.

These ministers have the option of submitting an application of renewal that includes:

- 1. A note from a Unitarian Universalist colleague confirming that the minister has been meeting with a Unitarian Universalist collegial group on a regular basis (at least every two months) with at least four other colleagues for the previous year;*
- 2. A 1–2 page written self-reflection on their Unitarian Universalist ministry experience;*
- 3. A submission of a professional development report from the past year and a plan for the upcoming year;*
- 4. A Parish Ministry Cover Page or a Community Minister Cover Page.*

Renewal of fellowship will be based on this material submitted.

Rationale for eliminating:

Without the Committee having knowledge of the origins, history and use of this rule, it strikes us as potentially problematic – especially at this time with a new deliberately egalitarian process is being developed for renewals. We suspect that this policy was conceived and employed at a time where the UU Ministry was a learned profession and not a learning one. Honoring the recent experience of MFC panels that contemporary UU culture is complex and nuanced and cannot be assumed or intuited, we are unconvinced that someone from a different denomination could integrate and employ all the subtleties of UU professional practice without a period of intentional mentored development –precisely the purpose for which Preliminary Fellowship is being redesigned. While we believe the UU Professional Ministry can become even better with a path of entry for professionals from other denominations, we believe that such professionals need to transfer into the beginning stages of Preliminary Development with an appropriate mentor and a learning goal of fully understanding and integrating our culture into practice.

Motion by SWG to remove Policy 12.B. Approved, unanimous.

MFC Policies updated by Marion and Jonipher April 19, 2023

UUA STAFF REPORT ITEMS FOR MARCH 2023

From Marion Bell

By the numbers (as of March 1):

184 Aspirants
160 Candidates
344 Total in Formation

Scheduled:

15 Fall 2023 Interview
9 Winter 2023 Interview
4 Spring 2024 Interview

247 Ministers in Preliminary Fellowship

From Jonipher Kwong

I had an opportunity to preach at Meadville-Lombard’s convocation and present a “lunch and learn” session on the credentialing process the next day.

I also met with Boston University seminarians in person and answered some of their questions about the credentialing process in January.

Amanda Poppei, Michael Tino, and I will be pre-recording a video on the credentialing process for GA this year. We are also working on a live workshop in the Ministries and Faith Development room and including our two UU identity schools for those exploring a call to ministry. Stay tuned for more details. We would appreciate any and all the promotion for this.

From Marta Valentín

The Professional Development Office and Ministerial Credentialing Office staff groups met for a one-day retreat (1/26) and had a fun and productive day. We learned more of each other from the N.E.S.T. exercise I shared from a recent Transformational Leadership retreat. It was suggested that it was a good way to check-in with your team so I wanted to try it. I was pleased that everyone allowed themselves to be vulnerable and engaged in it, especially because for some of us (like me) it was the first time returning to 24. Here it is if you want to use it as well.

Question: What is present for you right now?

N = How centered do I feel in my body? (1-10 scale)

E = emotions, What emotions are present?

S = sensations, What sensations are you feeling in your body?

T = thoughts, What thoughts are moving through your mind?

We spent time talking through the trajectory from aspirant through to Preliminary Fellowship and it was very good for everyone to understand better their role within it. It was helpful to see who is responsible for leading information into Raiser's Edge, Capsule and DocStar and how they interface. I am in awe of the amount of information that Marion Aastha, and Mary Krigbaum manage for all of us.

Community Minister Retreat update

GA gathering

Innovation Fund Design Team - Update

Mentoring Update Project with UUMA

From Sarah Lammert

Thanks to the efforts of our Co-Chairs, Jackie (Co-Chairing in Rebekah's absence), Joetta, Carey and our UUA Board liaisons (Sherman and Justine) the UUA passed the MFC Rule changes we passed as a Committee last year around the fellowship review process! WOOT! This will truly streamline the process, making it more humane for all parties involved. The UUMA has agreed to host two webinars for its members to explain the changes, and I'm grateful to Joetta and Greg for volunteering to accompany me for those sessions:

"2023 MFC Rule Changes for Misconduct Complaints"

2 Repeating Sessions :<https://uua.zoom.us/j/2806831946>

Mon Apr 10, 2023 8:30-9:15 pm ET/ 7:30-8:15 pm CT/ 6:30-7:15 pm MT/ 5:30-6:15 pm PT

Friday Apr 14, 2023 2:00-2:45 pm ET/ 1:00-1:45 pm CT/ 12:00-12:45 MT/ 11:00-11:15 PT

The UUA aspires to be a justice-making institution. In that vein, we are committed to continually reviewing and updating our approaches to investigating and adjudicating complaints of ethical violations and/or incompetence. Recently the UUA Board passed a number of updates to the MFC Rules which are intended to streamline the process while attending to the issue of fairness to all parties. There is also new clarity about not tolerating retaliation, and a new appendix which describes the thresholds for investigations and fellowship reviews. Come with your curiosity and questions!

I've offered a similar session to UURMaPA but they will likely encourage interested members to join the UUMA sessions.

Also, The Fulfilling the Call document is now ten years old! Some colleagues have pointed out that the "wellness" rubric contains suggestions we would now consider problematic in terms of bias regarding mental health, neurodivergence, and body-size. Darrick Jackson (UUMA) and I have published a disclaimer apologizing for this and suggesting that people NOT use the wellness rubric until we are able to update it. We are meeting soon to look at the whole document to determine a process for updating it.

CONVERSATION WITH READING LIST GROUP

Guests: Dan McKanan, Elias Ortega-Aponte, Sofia Betancourt

Dan – We want to hear your honest reactions. Highlight three big changes.

1. Enormous number of new resources avail last decade. Much in pastoral care, especially countering oppression and white supremacy culture.
2. A shift to personalization of lists. candidate designs their own list with abundance guidance with two sample lists.
3. Adding theology competency. Hard to shoehorn that work in current competencies.

Sofia- we came to this based on our work with candidates and the work they've already done. There needs to be room for different kinds of entrepreneurial ministries. Hoping students will demonstrate their preparation. Makes it more conversational with the MFC. Feels more inclusive. New material should drop. This is more well-rounded. Also a list like this allows for more accessibility. Much more inclusive – audio books, multi-media, etc. urgent and overdue.

Elias- considering scholarly work and practical ways. Conferences, etc. trying to allow for flexibility. Experiential learnings. More flexible lists allows for more self-reflection. Feel very strongly about theology competency addition.

Questions/comments:

Wondering how two lists were different? There are many ways to create a viable list. We built lists of really good examples, just not prescriptive.

I love it – been excited about flexibility of this list. It will be so helpful.

I love the paragraphs written and captured what we're looking for in competencies. I do think that, as a lay member of mfc, most of this territory is new, not all. The fact of a list enabled me as a lay leader, to be able to see they're meeting some expectations. That will be harder, I think for a lay person.,

LOST INTERNET CONNECTION FOR SEVERAL MINUTES AT THIS POINT

With a new competency comes a new essay. How would we frame the question that the essay might require?

They should be asked to articulate their own theology and talk of their dialog partners and identify them.

Many have lost anchor of where this tradition came from.

CONFIRMED UPCOMING MFC MEETING DATES:

Spring Retreat 2023 - May 8-10, 2023

Fall 2023 - Wednesday, September 20 (Exec only)-Sunday, September 24, 2023

Winter 2023 - Wednesday, November 29 (Exec only)-Sunday, December 3, 2023

Spring 2024 - Wednesday, April 3 (Exec only)-Sunday, April 7, 2024

New Dates affirmed:

Fall 2024 - Wednesday (exec only), September 25-Sunday, September 29. (Rosh Hashanah is the following week)

Winter 2024 - Wednesday (exec only), December 4-Sunday, December 8. (this is the Wednesday following Thanksgiving, which is November 28)

Guiding Principles for Transforming Preliminary Fellowship

Adopted by SWG and approved by the MFC in December 2022

As we seek to transform the system of preliminary fellowship, here are some guiding principles that we're working with:

1. We believe that the primary purpose of preliminary fellowship is for the MFC to partner with new ministers to identify, strengthen, and integrate healthy and sustainable practices of self-reflection, seeking constructive feedback and opportunities for accountability, creating plans for their ongoing professional development, and nurturing healthy collegial relationships
2. We seek a broader definition of ministry that allows for movement through preliminary fellowship by ministers serving in a wide variety of settings
 - a. We seek to de-center parish ministry as the default setting for preliminary fellowship, even if congregations and covenanted communities are still the basic unit of membership in the UUA and thus the basis for our polity
 - b. We seek to eliminate class barriers to ministry based in the notion that "real" ministry work is compensated at a certain level
3. We ground our work in an understanding that all of us are learning and growing throughout our lives, careers and callings
4. We seek a process that is more developmental and less evaluative
 - a. We will make the professional development plan the center of a renewal application
 - b. We believe that good mentoring is essential and will endeavor to partner with and empower mentors to do this role well
5. We seek a process that is more relational, encouraging, and supportive
6. We seek a process that enhances ministry rather than distracts the minister from it
 - a. We believe that ministers in preliminary fellowship will grow in resilience and integration with deeper connection and partnership with colleagues, mentors, congregations and/or covenanted communities
7. We seek a process that understands the complex systems and institutions in which ministry is performed and does not give those systems and institutions unaccountable power over a minister's progress towards full fellowship